



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

Senator Lea Webb, Assemblymember Sarah Clark, and Advocates to Hold Press Conference in Support of Legislation to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

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Legislation inspired by the tragic losses of Gabby Petito and other victims of domestic violence would save lives by providing law enforcement with a tool designed to help them identify victims who are most at risk for intimate partner homicide.

(ALBANY, NY) Today, Senator Lea Webb and Assemblymember Sarah Clark held a press conference with colleagues and Domestic Violence advocates in support of

their life-saving legislation (S2280A/A4899A) to require law enforcement officers to conduct a lethality assessment as part of the standardized domestic incident report form when responding to incidents of domestic violence.

Said Senator Lea Webb, “Lethality Assessments save lives by enabling law enforcement to identify victims at high risk of serious injury or death by their intimate partners. In addition to providing a life-saving tool to law enforcement statewide, this legislation ensures that victims are empowered with resources to stay safe and help to lessen the danger to their health and safety. By focusing on prevention, we can save the lives of victims before it’s too late. Thank you to Assemblymember Clark for her leadership on this issue, OPDV, advocates, and the Petito family for their advocacy on behalf of domestic violence survivors here in New York and across the country.”

Said Assemblymember Sarah Clark, “Domestic violence is a reality for too many members of our community, and far too often, that violence becomes deadly. By requiring a standardized lethality assessment during law enforcement responses, we can help improve safety, take action through referral to domestic violence programs, provide extreme risk protection orders or whatever appropriate action is warranted. In other places across our country, an evidence-based lethality assessment has saved lives. Thanks to Senator Webb and the many advocates throughout our state for their partnership to help those affected by domestic violence and ensure New York is a safer state for all.”

Said Senator Pete Harckham, “Conducting lethality assessments after incidents of domestic violence have been shown to dramatically reduce female homicide rates,” said Senator Harckham. “We should be utilizing every tool available to us to better protect members of our community and requiring our law enforcement professionals to conduct lethality assessments when responding to a domestic violence call is a common-sense measure to help save lives. Thank you to my colleague Senator Webb for introducing this critical legislation to protect public health.”

Said Joseph Petito, Father of Gabby Petito, “Our family stands firmly in support of NY Bill S2280A. This represents a critical step towards helping victims of domestic violence by prioritizing prevention and giving our law enforcement the tools to access and respond to domestic violence more effectively. It's a big jump to a future where every individual can feel safe in their own home.”

Said Joan Gerhardt, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, "This legislation supports a simple but potentially life-saving proposal – that when responding to domestic violence calls, police should not only intervene but also assess the risk of future harm to the parties involved and connect victims with potentially life-saving resources. Years of research have demonstrated that past behavior is a powerful predictor of future violence. By asking a series of questions about past behavior, police will get a more complete picture of what is happening between the parties and will be able to connect the victim to a local domestic violence service provider for emergency safety planning and enhanced service provision. Even if victims are not ready to seek help, a lethality screen affords them insight into the warning signs that could indicate an abusive relationship is escalating in severity. We thank Senator Webb and Assemblymember Clark for introducing this smart, responsible and compassionate step forward in the State's response to domestic violence."

Said David M. Ryan, Director, Westchester County DV High Risk Team, "This legislation will be a game-changer for how law enforcement responds to intimate partner violence. The lethality assessment which is an evidence based and Office for Violence Against Women validated danger assessment tool will save lives and immediately connect victims with life-saving safety planning and other DV services. It will also provide for a more consistent and efficient response by law enforcement throughout NY State to identify those victims at the highest risk for homicide or serious physical harm. I applaud the NY State Senate and the sponsors of this legislation for putting a proven life saving tool in the hands of law enforcement."

Said Meaghan de Chateaufieux, President & CEO, Willow Center, "This legislation was developed by listening closely to survivors, advocates, law enforcement, and community partners who know firsthand what it takes to save lives. By implementing a standardized lethality assessment during every domestic violence response, we are centering the needs of those most impacted and strengthening critical partnerships between law enforcement, advocates, and survivors. This tool will help survivors by giving them real-time, evidence-based information about their own risk level, and it will help responders better understand the urgency and risks of each situation. We are deeply grateful to Assemblymember Sarah Clark for always putting survivors first and for championing this life-saving work. Together, we are building safer futures across New York."

Said Senator Nathalia Fernandez, “Too many lives have been lost because the signs of escalating violence were recognized too late. This legislation reflects a necessary shift toward early intervention, informed response, and a system that takes the threat of domestic violence seriously. It provides a more coordinated, preventive approach that prioritizes the safety of survivors before the harm is done. I thank Senator Webb for her leadership on this critical issue and for championing a thoughtful, life-saving response to domestic violence across New York State.”

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “Lethality assessments help save lives, and this legislation equips law enforcement with a critical, evidence-based tool to protect victims of domestic violence and connect people with resources before it’s too late. Making this a statewide standard—building on models already used in communities like Dutchess County in my district—is a smart and necessary step. I’m proud to support this bill and thank Senator Webb and Assemblymember Clark for their leadership.”

Background:

Lethality assessments are a useful tool for law enforcement when responding to a domestic dispute. Studies have shown that the combination of questioning of victims while immediately providing resources for victims is a powerful tool in reducing deadly outcomes for victims. This “collaborative police and social service intervention” has its roots in Maryland, but other states including Utah and Florida have recently codified lethality assessments into law to ensure all police departments are able to utilize this tool aimed at fully assessing a domestic situation.

Through the lethality assessment and resource sharing, law enforcement empowers victims with information, potentially saving their lives. A recent study indicated that the use of lethality assessments reduces female homicide by men by almost 40%.

This legislation will codify uniform lethality assessment requirements into law to provide consistency across the state in the application and reporting of facts during a domestic dispute. This also requires law enforcement to receive training on the use of assessments. Additionally, this information is required to be included in Domestic Incident Reports (DIR).

Several communities across New York have adopted the use of lethality assessments including Broome, Dutchess and Westchester Counties. Uniform training and support

from DCJS and OPDV along with uniform reporting can protect victims as well as law enforcement in cases where there are repeated calls for intervention.

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